

# Determining the Strategic Status for I.R. of Iran Triathlon Federation

Mahdi Goudarzi<sup>1</sup>, Jasem Manouchehri<sup>2\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Payame-Noor University, Tehran, Iran; <sup>2</sup>College of Physical Education and Sport Sciences, Islamic Azad University, Central Tehran Branch, Tehran, Iran

\*E-mail: [j.manouchehri@iauctb.ac.ir](mailto:j.manouchehri@iauctb.ac.ir)

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## Abstract

Today, sports organizations like non-sports organizations are exposed to environmental and global changes and are involved in their own issues. Sport departments cope with problems like environmental changing especially in sport services' department. So, in this world which is changing in a high speed, organisations must frequently monitor domestic and foreign events to adapt themselves essentially to the changes in a good time, and the managers, relying on the long-term plans, must organize future guidelines in a way that is proportionate to future positions. In general, organizations confront different external environmental changes such as political, economic, social and technological factors, competitors, stakeholders, governmental institutions, financial mediators, unions, suppliers and also internal factors such as managerial, financial, marketing, services, research, development and computer information system and organizational, technical and individual variables. So, it seems to be important for triathlon federation to recognise strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to achieve a better position in international level, to do its responsibilities and duties effectively and optimally and to develop student sports' principals and objectives by maximum using of its strengths and opportunities and removing weaknesses and threats. The purpose of this study was to determine the strategic status for I.R. of Iran Triathlon Federation. The relevant literatures were reviewed and also the survey and PEST SCAN (Cronbach Alpha = 0.91) questionnaires and SWOT analysis were used for data collection. 78 former and current managers and experts together in triathlon federation were selected to complete the questionnaires. By Delphi method, meetings and several strategic analyzing steps, 11 strengths, 10 weaknesses, 8 opportunities and 13 threats were recognized and ranked based on Friedman test. Moreover, the strategic status for the federation was determined in WT by matrixes of internal and external evaluation factors.

**Keywords:** Strategic Status, Triathlon Federation, Iran, IEF Matrix, SWOT

## Introduction

Managers have recognized that they can achieve their programmes to make organisation work better and respond to its environment by determining the goals and the Organisation's mission in a long term. Therefore, using comprehensive and strategic programmes have been introduced as a necessity in organisations because strategic planning, by analysing status quo, says where organisations are and stand now, and by analysing favourite state, it says where they intend to reach, and by this planning enable the management to determine its orientation in the future and makes organisation be equipped against upcoming changes. Hence, it is indispensable for all the organisations to be responsible for strategic management, and the organisations who can use science and strategic management are the winners.

Today, sports organizations like non-sports organizations are exposed to environmental and global changes and are involved in their own issues. Responding this, Kriemadis (1997) reported

that sport departments cope with problems like environmental change especially in sport services' department (ISCLS, 2002). So, in this world which is changing in a high speed, organisations must frequently monitor domestic and foreign events to adapt themselves essentially to the changes in a good time, and the managers, relying on the long-term plans, must organize future guidelines in a way that is proportionate to future positions.

According to chapel (2004), Botswana national Olympic committee confronted some problems include dependent sport, unjustified distribution of budget, unable to absorb the sponsors, no qualified coaches or trainers, lack of facilities and poor structure.

According to the research findings by using of the SWOT analysis, 2007, Malaysia national Olympic committee reported some weaknesses like insufficient organization, incomplete using of Olympic rings' customer absorption, and under doing in increasing existing resources and facilities and the threads like turning philanthropy incentives into financial incentives in athletes and volunteers, and finally unreasonable expectations.

Goudarzi (2013), clarifying status quo in physical education headquarter of Payame-Noor University, after creating the internal and external factors, noted that this organisation is in SO area regard to the strategic position and can use its opportunities and strengths to achieve its objectives.

Javadipour and Saminia (2013), clarifying sport for all strategic position, noted that Iran sport for all is in strength point regard to internal factors, and it is in opportunities' area regard to external factors.

ShabaniBahar and Parsajou (2012), strategic internal and external analysing in Sport & Youngsters headquarter of Hamedan, suggested that sport in Hamedan regards to internal factors (2.50) has strength and regards to external factors (2.60) has opportunity.

Abdavi et al. (2011), in designing and clarifying the strategic model, ICT, in IRI Physical Education Organization, noted that in Iran Sport organization, ICT position on SWOT is in weakness area, and in its matrices is in WT area. In this situation, preserving status quo strategy must be used and by decreasing the weaknesses, threads must be avoided.

SeyfPanahi Shabani et al. (2011), in designing and codifying for Kurdistan development strategy, suggested that according to the final score of internal factor (2.29) evaluation matrix and external factor (2.44) evaluation matrix, the strategic position of athletic sport for this province is in WT area.

Hosseini et al. (2008), in codifying operational plan for Islamic Azad University's sport, noted that its position is in WO area.

Qofrani et al. (2010), has suggested that Physical Education Organization of Sistan and Balouchestan announced that final score for internal and external factors assessment matrix is in growth and constructing area; so, we must use growth and development strategies. And his findings in designing and codifying the sport for all development strategy in that province, suggested that because of its factors assessment matrix final score in growth and constructing area, we must use the growth and development strategies.

Jahanbini et al. (2009), in a study entitled "development strategy of public and athletic sport in Qom" concluded that this province should use growth and development strategies because it is in offensive strategy area of (SO).

Nadari et al. (2009), in designing sport for all development strategy of Lorestan, after forming internal and external matrix, noted that Lorestan's sport for all regard to strategic position is in SO area.

Hamidi and Tojari (2012), findings show that Physical Education organization of Science Ministry regard to strategic position is in SO area.

Nasirzadeh (2008), in designing and codifying sport for all development strategy of Kerman, noted that Physical Education Organization of Kerman regard to strategic position in sport for all is in WT area, and this is a dangerous position and it is necessary to use defensive strategies. He also concluded that athlete sport in this organization regard to strategic position is in SO area and can use its strengths and opportunities.

BadriAzarin et al. (2007), to assess gymnastic state in Iran, with an approach to codify comprehensive system of human sources in gymnastic, studied 30 provinces and suggested that gymnastic position is in weakness area and we must use innovation strategy.

In general, organizations confront different external environmental changes such as political, economic, social and technological factors, competitors, stakeholders, governmental institutions, financial mediators, unions, suppliers and also internal factors such as managerial, financial, marketing, services, research, development and computer information system and organizational, technical and individual variables.

One of the ways to recognise organizations' situation is "environmental survey", which includes monitoring, evaluation and publishing concluded information about organizational environment. Among key and influential persons in organization, and is a tool to prevent from strategic shocks and to prepare long-term health for organization. In such an environment, organizations deal with external factors like political, economic, social and technological forces and internal factors like managerial, financial, marketing, services, research and development, and computer information system (Arabi, Aghazadeh, & Nezamivand Chegini, 2010).

The common method to identify these factors is using of SWOT analysis which is representative of organizational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This method allows to survey factors and to compare difficulties, threats and harmful aspects for organization, opportunities, demands, external environment with organization's weaknesses and strengths (Hamidizadeh, 2003).

It is believed that strategic planning is a key element for organizational supremacy and an important tool for organizational effectiveness.

For instance, American National Collegiate Athletic Association strategic planning, Canadian Interuniversity Sport strategic planning, Australian University Sport strategic planning and University Sport South Africa strategic planning, all express using of strategic planning and knowing sport organizations environment to achieve sport success and surviving. Among these, it is obvious that Triathlon Federation confront many problems and challenges to do its responsibilities and to achieve its objectives.

So, it seems to be important for triathlon federation to recognise strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to achieve a better position in international level, to do its responsibilities and duties effectively and optimally and to develop student sports' principals and objectives by maximum using of its strengths and opportunities and removing weaknesses and threats. In other hand, those above make triathlon federation identify its status quo correctly, recognise the best destination and determine the way, and also make it face future challenges and find a solution for them in its field.

Therefore, this federation tried to determine its strategic position by applying SWOT analysis process and using the common patterns and science methods used specially by sports organizations.

### **Methodology**

This work, because of its conclusions, is a type of functional researches, and regard to study, is a case research that collected data in qualitative and quantitative form, and has surveyed the documents and evidences, opinion poll from this federation's elites by Delphi method, analysing

conducted studies, and strategic meeting with commission directors of province, vice chancellors, board members, and current and last directors.

In opinion poll part, factor-analysis questionnaires contain open and close questions which its reliability was confirmed by some clear sighted professors and its validity was confirmed by Cronbach Alpha (0.86) method, and SWOT analysis and PEST SCAN also were used.

After analysing data concluded by documents and evidences, comparative studies, opinion polls, 42 internal and external factors were recognised, and then by Delphi method, strategic council meeting and some strategic analysis, eventually 11 strengths, 10 weaknesses, 8 opportunities, and 13 threats were confirmed and were ranked by Freedman Test.

#### ***Study Statistical sample and population***

We needed some people who is aware and familiar with triathlon sport and federation external and internal factors to remark about strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. So, some people involved in key positions in federation were selected.

The numbers of those above which contain research population were 78, and regard to limitation in their numbers, the sample was selected overall and tantamount to statistical population.

**Table 1: Statistical society and sample of the research**

No	Expert Groups
1	Presidents of the federation – 1 person
2	Vice-presidents since establishing the federation – 4 people
3	Presidents of provincial departments – 37 people
4	General secretaries since establishing the federation – 3 people
5	Board members since establishing the federation – 33 people

#### **Results**

We used evaluation matrix to evaluate internal factors. In this matrix, identified strengths and weaknesses were located in a column and were ranked by using some special coefficients and ranks to identify whether this federation totally regard to internal factors has contains strength or weakness points. In this matrix, strategic factors or prior internal factors were filed in first column framing strengths and weaknesses, and then in second column regard to each factor importance and sensitivity, with comparing these factors with each other, accrues a priority between 0 to 1; the designation of these priorities must be so that sum coefficients not to be more than 1. In third column, regard to be a key or ordinary strength or weakness, rank 4 or 3 assigned to strengths and rank 2 or 1 assigned to weakness respectively. Ranks assigning means if strengths are in an excellence level, they will get rank 4, and if they are in an ordinary level, they will get rank 3; and if weaknesses are in an ordinary level rank 2, and if they are critical, they will get rank 1. Therefore, ranking procedure is in a way whatever we move from excellent strength to critical weakness, the rank will be reduced and will get from 4 to 1. In fourth column, second column priorities and third column ranks for each factor will be crossed in to identify that factor score. At the button of this column, the final score is determined regard to have strength or weakness.

If sum final score in this matrix is more than 2.5 means that everything is as we expected, the strengths will come over the weaknesses; and in the contrast, weaknesses will come over the strengths.

And also, for evaluating external factors, external factors evaluation matrix was used. Like former, in this matrix, if sum final score of this federation is more than 2.5, it means the opportunities will come over the threats and vice versa.

**Table 2: Internal Factors Evaluation Matrix of I.R.Iran Triathlon Federation**

Internal Factors	Abbreviation	Factors	Significant Coefficient	Rating	Point
Strengths	S1	Human resources (the federation president with his international seats)	0.04	4	0.16
	S2	Human resources (triathlon officials in all around the Iran who love this sport)	0.02	3	0.06
	S3	Human resources (committed and experienced personnel in the federation and its provincial departments)	0.02	3	0.06
	S4	Human resources (capable and expert board members of the federation)	0.04	4	0.16
	S5	Human resources (capable managers in provincial departments who are mostly official in Iran)	0.04	4	0.16
	S6	Education committee (instructors and educational resources for triathlon)	0.04	3	0.12
	S7	Talent identification committee (programs, models, and scientific criteria for TID in triathlon)	0.04	4	0.16
	S8	Public relations (communicating possibility and noticing effectively throughout the federation)	0.03	3	0.09
	S9	International relations (international interactions and seats)	0.04	3	0.12
	S10	Organizational culture (ethical and Islamic values throughout the federation)	0.02	3	0.06
	S11	Organizational structure (active provincial departments in all around of Iran)	0.03	3	0.09
Weaknesses	W1	Human resources (inadequate expert coaches and referees of triathlon)	0.07	1	0.07
	W2	Economic resources (inadequate budget allocating by Sport & Youth Ministry and NOC of Iran)	0.07	1	0.07
	W3	Economic resources (limited income in triathlon)	0.07	1	0.07
	W4	Material resources (restriction of facilities and equipments for triathlon and high expenses to buy)	0.07	1	0.07
	W5	Information resources (inadequate knowledge and modern information systems for educational communications)	0.07	1	0.07
	W6	Operational processes (inappropriate identification, development and preparation of athletes)	0.07	1	0.07
	W7	Organizational structure and organizing (inadequate participation and promotion by provincial department)	0.04	2	0.08
	W8	Marketing committee (inadequate cooperation with sponsors)	0.07	1	0.07
	W9	Marketing committee (restriction number of covered athletes)	0.07	1	0.07
	W10	Marketing committee (lack of appropriate and extended advertisement of triathlon)	0.07	1	0.07
Total			1	-	2.02



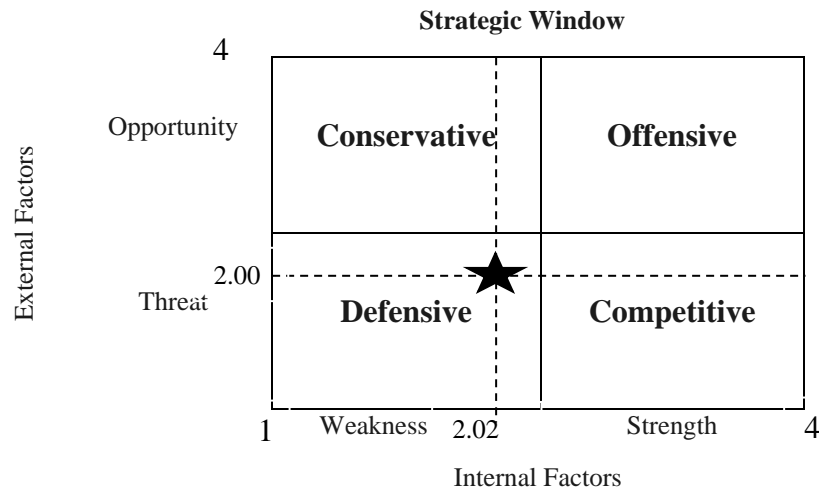
The results showed that sum of internal factors matrix scores is 2.02 and is less than 2.5. This means that triathlon federation, regard to internal factors, and contain weakness.

**Table 3: External Factors Evaluation Matrix of I.R.Iran Triathlon Federation**

Internal Factors	Abbreviation	Factors	Significant Coefficient	Rating	Point
Opportunities	O1	Political (alignment of triathlon with passive defense affecting national security)	0.03	3	0.09
	O2	Environmental (weather diversity and climate variety in Iran)	0.04	4	0.16
	O3	Social (triathlon included in Olympics program)	0.04	4	0.16
	O4	Political (serious attention to triathlon by military organizations)	0.04	3	0.12
	O5	Social (possibility of utilizing professors and graduated people in physical education curriculum)	0.03	3	0.09
	O6	Social (existence of inherent talents in Iran)	0.07	4	0.28
	O7	Social (agreement between Education ministry and Sport & Youth Ministry of Iran)	0.04	3	0.12
	O8	Cultural & Social (supports by sport organization of Tehran Municipality)	0.04	3	0.12
Threats	T1	Social (poor priority for triathlon by Sport & Youth Ministry and NOC of Iran)	0.06	1	0.06
	T2	Political (destruction of national image by global exploitation toward debilitating of global participation of Iranians)	0.03	2	0.06
	T3	External opponents (increasing technical and scientific levels of national triathlon federation in the Asia and world)	0.07	1	0.07
	T4	Internal opponents (increasing the number of more interesting and cheaper sports)	0.05	1	0.05
	T5	Social (lack of capacities and interests equilibrium among provinces)	0.05	1	0.05
	T6	Social (over-assignment of pool working times to leisure)	0.07	1	0.07
	T7	Social (poor performance of Iranian swimming generally)	0.06	1	0.06
	T8	Economical (weak interest and collaboration by sponsors and commercial NGOs)	0.05	2	0.10
	T9	Economical (increased dollar rate and decreased the number of dispatched teams to international events)	0.06	1	0.06
	T10	Technological (restriction for utilizing new technologies)	0.04	2	0.08
	T11	Technological (utilizing modern technologies by other nations for preparing the elite athletes)	0.04	2	0.08
	T12	Cultural (restriction for women sport uniform in swimming)	0.04	1	0.04
	T13	Environmental (destruction of lakes and promenades appropriating for triathlon)	0.04	2	0.08
Total			1	-	2.00

Results also showed that sum of external factors matrix scores is 2.00 and is less than 2.50. It also means that this federation, regard to external factors, contain threats. Totally, the results of

tables 2 and 3 and also internal and external matrix suggested that triathlon federation, regard to strategic position, is in WT area; therefore, this federation regard to internal factors contain weakness and regard to external factors contain threat, and it is necessary to use defensive strategies (Table 1 & 2, Figure 1).



**Figure 1: internal and external matrix of the Iran Triathlon Federation**

### Discussion and Conclusion

Strategic planning was created to respond the environmental changes. Its supremacy and popularity toward traditional planning is for these reasons: choosing and representing the path to the goal based on internal features and organizational conditions. Then, it is necessary to recognize internal and external factors in organisation to choose right path toward achieving organizational goals. During identification and analysis stages for environmental factors, determining strategic position is the most important stage in choosing the strategies because strategies turn current state into favourite state, so if, for any reason, there is a fault in determining current state or strategic position, resulted strategies are not correct to achieve the goals and favourite state.

Reviewing researches in strategic management field, it is clear to see the determination of strategic position in organizations, and they have mostly suggested the strengths or weaknesses from inside, and opportunities or threats from outside. But the only thing which is not clear exactly is their honesty and reliability of extracted environmental factors or determined strategic position because the opinions by high managers and elites about organization current state can have some consequences by stakeholders. Therefore, magnifying the strengths and opportunities and ignoring the weaknesses and threats more than really it is has caused some distraction in codifying strategic planning and strategic positions are not really reported. It will create other distortions in strategies codification, implementation and assessment. However, current study has tried, by using of scientific processes in strategic planning and using of carefulness in identifying and determining really strategic state of triathlon federation, by avoiding common distortions and preconceptions in codification stage, provide a plot for next stages based on status quo.

In strategic studies, determined external and internal strategies are reserved for related organizations and the only distinction in this plan is focusing on special characteristics and specific features of organizations to codify the plan. So, comparing strategic research results, especially about strategic position from strategic perspective, is not normative. But from the aspect of descriptive discussions, the result can be reported. Therefore, triathlon federation strategic position is similar to strategic positions in researches of Seifpanahi shabani et al. (2011), about athletic sport

in Kurdistan; Abdavi et al. (2011) about ICT position in Iran sport organization; Nasirzadeh et al. (2008) about sport for all in Kerman and BadriAzin et al. (2007) about gymnastic, and all mentioned above are in WT area which means a dangerous position, and it is necessary to use defensive strategies. Also it is not, regard to strategic position, corresponding with the researches of Goudarzi (2013), Hosseini et al. (2008), Hamidi and Tojari (2012), Jahanbini (2009), Ghofrani et al. (2010), Nadari (2009), Nasirzadeh et al. (2008) about athletic sport in Physical Education Organization of Kerman. Finally, it is proposed that it is necessary to clarify appropriate strategy regard to defensive position of triathlon federation so that the federation can plan its operations and activities for exiting this situation.

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